The Commonweal
February 11, 1949

# The Hint of an Explanation

*Graham Greene*

## THE PEACE OFFENSIVE

## A STRANGE APOLOGY

VOLUME XLIX 15c NUMBER 18

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# Next Week

IL AMERICANO, by John Cogley. " . . . The first thing I noticed about Rico, who workes at the Piazza d'Espagna in Rome, was that he had none of the usual mannerisms. There was nothing of the penny-ante gangster about him. He looked you in the eye when he talked. He didn't look out for cops who weren't there or who wouldn't care if they were there.

"He was polite and obviously aimed to please, but his was the manner of a magazine salesman working his way through college, rather than the whining routine of some of the others. For instance, he didn't talk about a sick family or a dead mother. I met him during Christmas week, and what he said was this: 'Tomorrow night is New Year's Eve. Want to take my girl out. You got to sing and dance on New Year's Eve, don't you? But I am broke. I need money. How about it?'

"He was taller than the others, and only the inevitable bad teeth of Europe's war generation keeps him from qualifying as a new Rudolph Valentino. His English flowed freely and was not limited to the black market argot of his friends. They stood around in smiling wonder after he began to talk, silenced by the ease with which he handled the language . . . "

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The
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## *To Spite His Face?*

"A FULL-SCALE attack upon the principle of the separation of church and state has been launched by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church," Methodist Bishop Oxnam told a conference at Washington's Constitution Hall on Jan. 27. This statement has absolutely no basis either in historical or contemporary fact.

"When I signed the Declaration of Independence," declared one of the Catholics who did so, "I had in view . . . the toleration of all sects professing the Christian religion, and communicating to them all equal rights." Bishop John Carroll, in 1787, declared "freedom and independence, acquired by the united efforts, and cemented with the mingled blood of Protestant and Catholic fellow citizens, should be equally enjoyed by all." And Cardinal Gibbons, a century later, reiterated the same statement: "The separation of church and state in this country seems to Catholics the natural, the inevitable, the best conceivable plan, and the one that would work best among us. . . . American Catholics rejoice in our separation of church and state." Only last May, Dr. John O'Brien, of Notre Dame, stated: "Catholics believe in the equality of all churches before the law. Far from seeking to maneuver their church into a position of special privilege, they would resent any effort to do so."

In Missouri, alone, Protestant teachers are being paid by the state to teach religion in 282 rural schools (as of May, 1948), and there has been no Catholic Vashti from Columbia (instead of Champaign), danieling to the Supreme Court for just relief from this most grievous wrong. On the contrary, the Church would welcome federal support of Protestant schools, Unitarian schools, Christian Science Schools, Jewish Schools as it does in England, where bona-fide, state-inspected schools of any denomination are given state-aid.

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," says the First Amendment; and this American principle of the separation of church and state is assented to 100 percent by American Catholics. Never, equivocally nor unequivocally, has the Catholic hierarchy, singly or collectively, avowed its intention to break down this separation. But the signatories are unanimous (in the anti-secularist statement of Nov. 21, 1948) in stating "Human life centers in God . . . the essential connection between religion and good citizenship is deep in our American tradition. As the Northwest ordinance put it, 'Religion, morality and knowledge being necessary to good citizenship and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.'" That encouragement, as expressed by a recent Supreme Court decision, includes the free use of public transportation, and, in some states, of hot lunches, in church schools; the federal support of chaplains to the army and navy; federal assistance and state support of religious activity in hospitals and prisons; and the GI Bill paying vast sums to religious schools and colleges.

Bishop Oxnam is indeed cutting off his nose to spite his face if he asks the State to deny these facilities to all because it grants them also to Catholics. What would happen to the 282 Protestant teachers in Missouri alone? What to all the Protestant chaplains, so gloriously associated with their Catholic colleagues, even on sinking ships and US Federal stamps? Bishop Oxnam says, "Protestants insist that the same right ("to teach and win individuals for Christ") be maintained by all churches, and that the Constitution is a guarantee of freedom." But he is trying to lobby Congress into denying the State's cooperation with any of the corporal works of religion, simply in order to deny such cooperation with Catholics.

The Church has a deep concern and a living affection for a right relationship between the State and herself. Secularization is, she knows, the State's spiritual death, for the State, no less than the Church, exists to provide men with the means to live the good life. Unless their efforts run parallel, there will be no society, but paralysis.



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*The Peace Offensive*

IN THE choosing-up-sides between East and West, two new councils have been added to the line-ups: for the West, a Council of Europe, composed of Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, will work out mutual political agreements and will, hopefully, prepare for the eventual federation of European states; for the East, a Council of Economic Mutual Aid, composed of Russia, Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Hungary, will further integrate the economies, currencies and technical practices of Russia and the satellites. Russia, nervous over the success of ERP and the Western Union, and increasingly worried at the prospect of the North Atlantic Pact, has made it appear that her Council of Mutual Aid is a counter-Marshall Plan; actually it is simply a tightening of the satellite bloc-politics begun by her in 1945 immediately after the War.

Bloc-politics and balance of power are of course nothing new to European diplomacy; when the United Nations was formed, there were hopes that power politics, which had not always in the past preserved balance or prevented wars, might give way gradually to effective world government, to an era of "legislated" peace. Russia's obstructionist tactics in the UN so paralyzed any important action by that body that the Western nations were compelled to go outside the UN, while staying within its Charter, to form a Western Union making economic and political recovery and military defense possible. What Russia tried to prevent within the UN is being accomplished by the Western nations outside the UN; to Russian minds, this concerted Western action, this non-appeasement, is daily a growing and willful resistance to Communist strategy.

Unable this time to throw their veto into the works, the Russians have had instead to resort to propaganda: first the French Communist M. Cachin, then the Italian Communist Togliatti started the magic word "peace" going in and out of minds, mouths and presses the world around. Finally, Mr. Stalin himself made a peace gesture and condescended to be quoted: answering the questions put to him by an American newsman, Stalin made no concessions, said nothing he had not said before; yet Mr. Stalin's sparse words were scrutinized, devoured, diagnosed and "commented on" at windy length by every available authority; now, in the end, after Washington continued cool to the Russian hints, there is report of an open invitation for Mr. Truman to travel East again.

At this time, just as Western resistance and recovery are drawing steadily to full strength, Mr. Stalin's tactics are obvious and contemptible. It is ironic and supremely appropriate that our Government should laconically point out to the Russians that the United Nations Charter is an agreement to arrive at peaceful solutions and is a more suitable instrument than bi-lateral "peace pacts."

On occasion, as in Kansas City recently, Mr. Truman has seemed to waver into a Yalta mood, saying that "old Joe" is a good fellow, and that some Russian leaders want peace with the West. And surely any sincere desire to establish peace is welcome to us. So Mr. Truman might, for example, agree to meet Mr. Stalin *after* he has agreed to recognize the UN majority recommendations on international control of atomic weapons. For if we have learned nothing else these past years from totalitarian demagogues, we should have learned that sincerity is more than words.

*Protection for the Individual Worker*

ULTIMATELY the news from Milwaukee that the United Auto Workers are going into the cooperative movement in a big way may affect the coming American pattern considerably more than the final form of the Truman Labor Bill. It calls for comment of some length. But in the meantime, since the labor bill hearings provide daily headlines, and a new act (unlike many current presidential proposals) is virtually certain, it is worth suggesting at the outset a few changes in the first draft.

Several Taft-Hartley provisions now scheduled for the ash heap afford protection of individual rights which should not be cavalierly tossed aside. Notably the T-H ban on excessive union initiation fees (which should at least be subject to review by the NLRB), the filing of union constitutions and financial reports with the Secretary of Labor, and the holding of elections to "decertify" unions no longer wanted by the rank and file. One entirely new provision is called for by the situation in which an individual worker loses his job as a result of some union shop or closed shop agreement. Surely he should be protected at his work until his case has had adequate review.

# A Strange Apology

THE Executive Committee of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference has uttered a "Statement on Industrialism and Agrarianism" which has just been published by their paper, the *Christian Farmer*. The what, the why and wherefore are rather hard to get from the statement itself, but an accompanying press release refers to the debates in the correspondence pages of COMMONWEAL, between "agrarian spokesmen," or "so-called agrarians," on the one hand, and "urban proponents of industrial reform" on the other. Strangely, the statement reads like a sweeping repudiation of the efforts of the agrarians, and a rotund apology for centralized, mass industrial-

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ism and "urban proponents of industrial reform."

The witheringly institutional statement issued is fortunately utterly anonymous, so that a review of it can be quite objective, and free to ask certain questions whose answers are needed to settle the mind about some of the points at issue which COMMONWEAL correspondents brought out in their welcome debate in these columns.

We are given as of today, today's industrial economic set-up. The NCRLC statement is a series of paragraphs mildly noting a series of imperfections currently associated with the set-up, but emphasizing in almost every instance that the imperfections must not be taken as a sign that the set-up itself warrants attack. There appear to be three elements of change which the statement proposes to readers in order to fix things up good: "The National Catholic Rural Life Conference has always favored a reasonable decentralization of economic and industrial activity. . . . It prefers the family-type farm to the large corporate enterprise wherever possible. . . . The Conference strongly favors the development of garden homes and of rural living." Garden homes; and that is the peak of excitement!

It is very difficult to try to separate these industrial problems and make them mean something definite. Just about everything the NCRLC statement says seems to me true. Of course, "God intended that man should find new and better ways of utilizing the resources of material creation." Naturally, "scientific discovery and technological development are not of themselves opposed to the nature and welfare of man." It would take a very odd mentality to deny that "through the development of the machine genuine benefits have accrued to mankind." And so forth. But it does seem to me almost certain that these matters which this statement unenthusiastically disposes of are *not* the matters which rouse the unusual interest and concern of the people who have followed the decentralist-industrialist controversy in the COMMONWEAL letter columns.

Today's mass, central industrialism is an immense and imposing economy. It is an organism as well as a machine. It integrates and unifies science, material techniques, institutional ordering, ownership, law, enforcement. It involves the central, mass method of exploitation of raw materials, manufacture, and distribution. It involves, it includes, the environment it exists in.

It appears to the distributist that the so-called industrialist wing inclines to concentrate upon (a) handling the *results* of the process: problems of the sharing by economic classes in the commodities and services and financial tokens produced by the given economic organism; and (b) secondarily, upon the sharing of authority over the accepted process among bureaucratic managers representing economic class interests involved.

The agrarians and decentralists incline to concentrate upon the process itself. The organism of production and distribution, and all the economic process that involves, has a priority of interest because it directly affects happiness, and the spirit in which, and the way things are done largely determine the results and products of the economy, and influence powerfully the personal way of life of the people engaged. It is not only a question of how the pie is divided, or who bosses the stove. It is also a question of what the pie is, to eat, and what sort of a place the kitchen is, to live in.

The criticism of the process and environment is by now highly developed, and, for purposes of this protest, self-evident. That criticism too easily becomes altogether negative, anyway, (and practically nihilistic in the terms of some of the agrarians whom the NCRLC chides). What is desired deeply is a clearer and more precise vision, and better defined and more practical techniques to achieve that vision. Something a good deal more vitalizing than "reasonable decentralization . . . the family-type farm wherever possible . . . garden homes."

*Business Week* commented January 8 upon a related topic: the efforts to control mergers accomplished through purchase by one company of the physical assets of another. The reasonable point was made that the Federal Trade Commission's "studies don't go far enough. They would perform their rôle much more effectively if, instead of being limited to the 'how' and 'where' of mergers, they dug more thoroughly into the 'why'—particularly, into the reasons why companies sell themselves into mergers."

If super-urbanized, mass centralized, assembly line production with its crowded but atomized personal and social life is anywhere near as unsatisfactory as nearly all critics think and feel, then why does it keep piling up, and why do even the mild correctives which the NCRLC advocate make so little progress? The alternatives are not presented, and the ways to achieve the alternatives are not shown forth. The very conception of the good life appears paralyzed by the overwhelming presence of what the World forces upon us now. Social and political and economic reforms must be thought out and presented with life and realism, which actually lead away from grim industrialism. That "family farm" must exist and appear as a genuinely livable way of life. The whole and free life must be illustrated. People must be shown how they, themselves, actually, can find an alternative life in a setting they are convinced is better. Scientists, technicians, inventors must be welcomed with enthusiasm and persuaded to work out machines and ways of production which surpass the clumsy, massed methods of the immediate mills and factories, and slums. The deep debate between "industrialists" and "decentralists" is not going to be resolved, Heaven help us, by garden suburbs!

PHILIP BURNHAM.

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# *The Hint of an Explanation*

*Graham Greene*

A LONG train journey on a late December evening, in this new version of peace, is a dreary experience. I suppose that my fellow-traveler and I could consider ourselves lucky to have a compartment to ourselves, even though the heating apparatus was not working, even though the lights went out entirely in the frequent Pennine tunnels and were too dim anyway for us to read our books without straining our eyes, and though there was no restaurant car to give at least a change of scene. It was when we were trying simultaneously to chew the same kind of dry bun bought at the same station buffet that my companion and I came together. Before that we had sat at opposite ends of the carriage, both muffled to the chin in overcoats, both bent low over type we could barely make out, but as I threw the remains of my cake under the seat our eyes met, and he laid his book down.

By the time we were half-way to Bedwell Junction we had found an enormous range of subjects for discussion; starting with buns and the weather, we had gone on to politics, the government, foreign affairs, the atom bomb, and, by an inevitable progression, God. We had not, however, become either shrill or acid. My companion, who now sat opposite me, leaning a little forward, so that our knees nearly touched, gave such an impression of serenity that it would have been impossible to quarrel with him, however much our views differed, and differ they did profoundly.

I had soon realized I was speaking to a Catholic, to someone who believed—how do they put it?—in an omnipotent and omniscient Deity, while I was what is loosely called an Agnostic. I have a certain intuition (which I do not trust, founded as it may well be on childish experiences and needs) that a God exists, and I am surprised occasionally into belief by the extraordinary coincidences that beset our path like the traps set for leopards in the jungle, but intellectually I am revolted at the whole notion of such a God Who can so abandon His creatures to the enormities of Free Will. I found myself expressing this view to my companion, who listened quietly and with respect. He made no attempt to interrupt: he showed none of the impatience or the intellectual arrogance I have grown to expect from Catholics; when the lights of a wayside station flashed across his face that had escaped hitherto the rays of the one globe working in the compartment, I caught a glimpse suddenly of—what? I stopped speaking, so strong was the impression. I was carried back ten years, to the other side of the great useless conflict, to a small town, Gisors in Normandy. I was again, for a moment, walking on the ancient battlements and looking down across the grey roofs, until my eyes for some reason lit on one grey stony "back" out of the many, where the face of a middle-aged man was pressed against a windowpane (I suppose that face has ceased to exist now, just as I believe the whole town with its medieval memories has been reduced to rubble). I remembered saying to myself with astonishment, "That man is happy—completely happy." I looked across the compartment at my fellow traveler, but his face was already again in shadow. I said weakly, "When you think what God—if there is a God—allows. It's not merely the physical agonies, but think of the corruption, even of children. . . ."

He said, "Our view is so limited," and I was disappointed at the conventionality of his reply. He must have been aware of my disappointment (it was as though our thoughts were huddled as closely as ourselves for warmth), for he went on, "Of course there is no answer here. We catch hints . . ." and then the train roared into another tunnel and the lights again went out. It was the longest tunnel yet; we went rocking down it, and the cold seemed to become more intense with the darkness like an icy fog (perhaps when one sense —of sight—is robbed of sensation, the others grow more sensitive). When we emerged into the mere grey of night and the globe lit up once more, I could see that my companion was leaning back on his seat.

I repeated his last words as a question. "Hints?"

"Oh, they mean very little in cold print—or cold speech," he said, shivering in his overcoat. "And they mean nothing at all to a human being other than the man who catches them. They are not scientific evidence—or evidence at all for that matter. Events that don't, somehow, turn out as they were intended—by the human actors I mean, or by the thing behind the human actors."

"The thing?"

"The word Satan is so anthropomorphic."

I had to lean forward now: I wanted to hear what he had to say. I am—I really am, God knows—open to conviction.

He said, "One's words are so crude, but I



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sometimes feel pity for that thing. It is so continually finding the right weapon to use against its Enemy and the weapon breaks in its own breast. It sometimes seems to me so— powerless. You said something just now about the corruption of children. It reminded me of something in my own childhood. You are the first person—except for one—that I have thought of telling it to, perhaps because you are anonymous. It's not a very long story, and in a way it's relevant."

I said, "I'd like to hear it."

"You mustn't expect too much meaning. But to me there seems to be a hint. That's all. A hint."

★

He went slowly on, turning his face to the pane, though he could have seen nothing real in the whirling world outside except an occasional signal lamp, a light in a window, a small country station torn backwards by our rush, picking his words with precision. He said, "When I was a child they taught me to serve at Mass. The church was a small one, for there were very few Catholics where I lived. It was a market town in East Anglia, surrounded by flat, chalky fields and ditches—so many ditches. I don't suppose there were fifty Catholics all told, and for some reason there was a tradition of hostility to us. Perhaps it went back to the burning of a Protestant martyr in the sixteenth century—there was a stone marking the place near where the meat stalls stood on Wednesdays. I was only half aware of the enmity, though I knew that my school nickname of Popey Martin had something to do with my religion, and I had heard that my father was nearly excluded from the Constitutional Club when he first came to the town.

"Every Sunday I had to dress up in my surplice and serve Mass. I hated it—I have always hated dressing up in any way (which is funny when you come to think of it), and I never ceased to be afraid of losing my place in the service and doing something which would put me to ridicule. Our services were at a different hour from the Anglican, and as our small, far-from-select band trudged out of the hideous chapel the whole of the townsfolk seemed to be on the way past to the proper church—I always thought of it as the proper church. We had to pass the parade of their eyes, indifferent, supercilious, mocking; you can't imagine how seriously religion can be taken in a small town, if only for social reasons.

"There was one man in particular; he was one of the two bakers in the town, the one my family did not patronize. I don't think any of the Catholics patronized him because he was called a freethinker—an odd title, for, poor man, no one's thoughts were less free than his. He was hemmed in by his hatred—his hatred of us. He was very ugly to look at, with one wall-eye and a head the shape of a turnip, with the hair gone on the crown, and he was unmarried. He had no interests, apparently, but his baking and his hatred, though now that I am older I begin to see other sides to his nature—it did contain, perhaps, a certain furtive love. One would come across him suddenly sometimes on a country walk, especially if one were alone and it was Sunday. It was as if he rose from the ditches, and the smear of chalk on his clothes reminded one of the flour on his working overalls. He would have a stick in his hand and stab at the hedges, and if his mood were very black he would call out after one strange abrupt words like a foreign tongue —I know the meaning of those words, of course, now. Once the police went to his house because of what a boy said he'd seen, but nothing came of it except that the hate shackled him closer. His name was Blacker and he terrified me.

"I think he had a particular hatred of my father—I don't know why. My father was manager of the Midland Bank, and it's possible that at some time Blacker may have had unsatisfactory dealings with the bank; my father was a very cautious man who suffered all his life from anxiety about money—his own and other people's. If I try and picture Blacker now I see him walking along a narrowing path between high windowless walls, and at the end of the path stands a small boy of ten—me. I don't know whether it's a symbolic picture or the memory of one of our encounters—our encounters somehow got more and more frequent. You talked just now about the corruption of children. That poor man was preparing to revenge himself on everything he hated—my father, the Catholics, the God whom people persisted in crediting—and that by corrupting me. He had evolved a horrible and ingenious plan.

"I remember the first time I had a friendly word from him. I was passing his shop as rapidly as I could when I heard his voice call out with a kind of sly subservience as though he were an under servant. 'Master David,' he called, 'Master David,' and I hurried on. But the next time I passed that way he was at his door (he must have seen me coming) with one of those curly cakes in his hand that we called Chelsea buns. I didn't want to take it, but he made me, and then I couldn't be other than polite when he asked me to come into his parlour behind the shop and see something very special.

"It was a small electric railway—a rare sight in those days, and he insisted on showing me how it worked. He made me turn the switches and stop and start it, and he told me that I could come in any morning and have a game with it. He used the word 'game' as though it were some-

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thing secret, and it's true that I never told my family of this invitation and of how, perhaps twice a week those holidays, the desire to control that little railway became overpowering, and looking up and down the street to see if I were observed, I would dive into the shop."

Our larger, dirtier, adult train drove into a tunnel and the light went out. We sat in darkness and silence, with the noise of the train blocking our ears like wax. When we were through we didn't speak at once and I had to prick him into continuing. "An elaborate seduction," I said.

"Don't think his plans were as simple as that," my companion said, "or as crude. There was much more hate than love, poor man, in his make-up. Can you hate something you don't believe in? And yet he called himself a free-thinker. What an impossible paradox, to be free and to be so obsessed. Day by day all through those holidays his obsession must have grown, but he kept a grip; he bided his time. Perhaps that thing I spoke of gave him the strength and the wisdom. It was only a week from the end of the holidays that he spoke to me on what concerned him so deeply.

"I heard him behind me as I knelt on the floor, coupling two coaches. He said, 'You won't be able to do this, Master David, when school starts.' It wasn't a sentence that needed any comment from me any more than the one that followed. 'You ought to have it for your own, you ought,' but how skillfully and unemphatically he had sowed the longing, the idea of a possibility. . . . I was coming to his parlour every day now; you see, I had to cram every opportunity in before the hated term started again, and I suppose I was becoming accustomed to Blacker, to that wall-eye, that turnip head, that nauseating subservience. The Pope, you know, describes himself as 'the servant of the servants of God' and Blacker—I sometimes think that Blacker was 'the servant of the servants of . . . ,' well, let it be.

*

"The very next day, standing in the doorway watching me play, he began to talk to me about religion. He said, with what untruth even I recognized, how much he admired the Catholics; he wished he could believe like that, but how could a baker believe? He accented 'a baker' as one might say a biologist, and the tiny train spun round the gauge 0 track. He said, 'I can bake the things you eat just as well as any Catholic can,' and disappeared into his shop. I hadn't the faintest idea what he meant. Presently he emerged again, holding in his hand a little wafer. 'Here,' he said, 'eat that and tell me. . . .' When I put it in my mouth I could tell that it was made in the same way as our wafers for communion—he had got the shape a little wrong, that was all—and I felt guilty and irrationally scared. 'Tell me,' he said, 'what's the difference?'

" 'Difference?' I asked.

" 'Isn't that just the same as you eat in church?'

"I said smugly, 'It hasn't been consecrated.'

"He said, 'Do you think, if I put the two of them under a microscope, you could tell the difference?'

"But even at ten I had the answer to that question. 'No,' I said, 'the—accidents don't change,' stumbling a little on the word 'accidents' which had suddenly conveyed to me the idea of death and wounds.

"Blacker said with sudden intensity, 'How I'd like to get one of your ones in my mouth—just to see. . . .'

"It may seem odd to you, but this was the first time that the idea of transsubstantiation really lodged in my mind. I had learned it all by rote; I had grown up with the idea. The Mass was as lifeless to me as the sentences in *De Bello Gallico;* communion a routine like drill in the school-yard, but here suddenly I was in the presence of a man who took it seriously, as seriously as the priest whom naturally one didn't count—it was his job. I felt more scared than ever.

"He said, 'It's all nonsense, but I'd just like to have it in my mouth.'

" 'You could if you were a Catholic,' I said naively.

"He gazed at me with his one good eye, like a Cyclops. He said, 'You serve at Mass, don't you? It would be easy for you to get at one of those things. I tell you what I'd do—I'd swap this electric train for one of your wafers—consecrated, mind. It's got to be consecrated.'

" 'I could get you one out of the box,' I said. I think I still imagined that his interest was a baker's interest—to see how they were made.

" 'Oh, no,' he said, "I want to see what your God tastes like.'

" 'I couldn't do that.'

" 'Not for a whole electric train, just for yourself? You wouldn't have any trouble at home. I'd pack it up and put a label inside that your dad could see: "For my bank manager's little boy from a grateful client." He'd be pleased as punch with that.'

"Now that we are grown men it seems a trivial temptation, doesn't it? But try to think back to your own childhood. There was a whole circuit of rails there on the floor at our feet, straight rails and curved, and a little station with porters and passengers, a tunnel, a foot-bridge, a level crossing, two signals, buffers, of course—and, above all, a turntable. The tears of longing came into my eyes when I looked at the turntable. It was my favorite piece—it looked so ugly and practical and true. I said weakly, 'I wouldn't know how.'

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"How carefully he had been studying the ground! He must have slipped several times into Mass at the back of the church. It would have been no good, you understand, in a little town like that, presenting himself for communion. Everybody there knew him for what he was. He said to me, 'When you've been given communion you could just put it under your tongue a moment. He serves you and the other boy first, and I saw you once go out behind the curtain straight afterwards. You'd forgotten one of those little bottles.'

" 'The cruet,' I said.

" 'Pepper and salt.' He grinned at me jovially, and I—well, I looked at the little railway which I could no longer come and play with when term started. I said, 'You'd just swallow it, wouldn't you?'

" 'Oh, yes,' he said. 'I'd just swallow it.'

"Somehow I didn't want to play with the train any more that day. I got up and made for the door, but he detained me, gripping my lapel. He said, 'This will be a secret between you and me. Tomorrow's Sunday. You come along here in the afternoon. Put it in an envelope and post it to me. Monday morning the train will be delivered bright and early.'

" 'Not tomorrow,' I implored him.

" 'I'm not interested in any other Sunday,' he said. 'It's your only chance.' He shook me gently backwards and forwards. 'It will always have to be a secret between you and me,' he said. 'Why, if anyone knew they'd take away the train and there'd be me to reckon with. I'd bleed you something awful. You know how I'm always about on Sunday walks. You can't avoid a man like me. I crop up. You wouldn't even be safe in your own house. I know ways to get into houses when people are asleep.' He pulled me into the shop after him and opened a drawer. In the drawer was an odd looking key and a cut-throat razor. He said, 'There's a master key that opens all locks and that—that's what I bleed people with.' Then he patted my cheek with his plump floury fingers and said, 'Forget it. You and me are friends.'

"That Sunday Mass stays in my head, every detail of it, as though it had happened only a week ago. From the moment of the Confession to the moment of Consecration it had a terrible importance; only one other Mass has ever been so important to me—perhaps not even one, for this was a solitary Mass which would never happen again. It seemed as final as the last Sacrament when the priest bent down and put the wafer in my mouth where I knelt before the altar with my fellow server.

"I suppose I had made up my mind to commit this awful act—for, you know, to us it must always seem an awful act—from the moment when I saw Blacker watching from the back of the church. He had put on his best black Sunday clothes and, as though he could never quite escape the smear of his profession, he had a dab of dried talcum on his cheek, which he had presumably applied after using that cut-throat of his. He was watching me closely all the time, and I think it was fear—fear of that terrible undefined thing called bleeding—as much as covetousness that drove me to carry out my instructions.

"My fellow server got briskly up and, taking the paten, preceded Father Carey to the altar rail where the other communicants knelt. I had the Host lodged under my tongue: it felt like a blister. I got up and made for the curtain to get the cruet that I had purposely left in the sacristy. When I was there I looked quickly round for a hiding place and saw an old copy of the *Universe* lying on a chair. I took the Host from my mouth and inserted it between two sheets—a little damp mess of pulp. Then I thought: perhaps Father Carey has put out the paper for a particular purpose and he will find the Host before I have time to remove it, and the enormity of my act began to come home to me when I tried to imagine what punishment I should incur. Murder is sufficiently trivial to have its appropriate punishment, but for this act the mind boggled at the thought of any retribution at all. I tried to remove the Host, but it stuck clammily between the pages, and in desperation I tore out a piece of the newspaper and, screwing the whole thing up, stuck it in my trousers pocket. When I came back through the curtain carrying the cruet my eyes met Blacker's. He gave me a grin of encouragement and unhappiness—yes, I am sure, unhappiness. Was it perhaps that the poor man was all the time seeking something incorruptible?

*

"I can remember little more of that day. I think my mind was shocked and stunned, and I was caught up too in the family bustle of Sunday. Sunday in a provincial town is the day for relations. All the family are at home, and unfamiliar cousins and uncles are apt to arrive, packed in the back seats of other people's cars. I remember that some crowd of the kind descended on us and pushed Blacker temporarily out of the foreground of my mind. There was somebody called Aunt Lucy, with a loud hollow laugh that filled the house with mechanical merriment like the sound of recorded laughter from inside a hall of mirrors, and I had no opportunity to go out alone even if I had wished to. When six o'clock came and Aunt Lucy and the cousins departed and peace returned, it was too late to go to Blacker's, and at eight it was my own bed-time.

"I think I had half forgotten what I had in my pocket. As I emptied my pocket the little screw of newspaper brought quickly back the

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Mass, the priest bending over me, Blacker's grin. I laid the packet on the chair by my bed and tried to go to sleep, but I was haunted by the shadows on the wall where the curtains blew, the squeak of furniture, the rustle in the chimney, haunted by the presence of God there on the chair. The Host had always been to me—well, the Host. I knew theoretically, as I have said, what I had to believe, but suddenly, as someone whistled in the road outside, whistled secretively, knowingly, to me, I knew that this which I had beside my bed was something of infinite value—something a man would pay for with his whole peace of mind, something that was so hated one could love it as one loves an outcast or a bullied child. These are adult words, and it was a child of ten who lay scared in bed, listening to the whistle from the road, Blacker's whistle, but I think he felt fairly clearly what I am describing now. That is what I meant when I said this Thing, whatever it is, that seizes every possible weapon against God, is always, everywhere, disappointed at the moment of success. It must have felt as certain of me as Blacker did. It must have felt certain too of Blacker. But I wonder, if one knew what happened later to that poor man, whether one would not find again that the weapon had been turned against its own breast.

"At last I couldn't bear that whistle any more and got out of bed. I opened the curtains a little way, and there right under my window, the moonlight on his face, was Blacker. If I had stretched my hand down, his fingers reaching up could almost have touched mine. He looked up at me, flashing the one good-eye, with hunger—I realize now that near-success must have developed his obsession almost to the point of madness. Desperation had driven him to the house. He whispered up at me. 'David, where is it?'

"I jerked my head back at the room. 'Give it me,' he said. 'Quick. You shall have the train in the morning.'

"I shook my head. He said, 'I've got the bleeder here, and the key. You'd better toss it down.'

" 'Go away,' I said, but I could hardly speak for fear.

" 'I'll bleed you first and then I'll have it just the same."

" 'Oh, no, you won't,' I said. I went to the chair and picked it—Him—up. There was only one place where He was safe. I couldn't separate the Host from the paper, so I swallowed both. The newsprint stuck like a prune skin to the back of my throat, but I rinsed it down with water from the ewer. Then I went back to the window and looked down at Blacker. He began to wheedle me. 'What have you done with it, David? What's the fuss? It's only a bit of bread,' looking so longingly and pleadingly up at me that even as a child I wondered whether he could really think that, and yet desire it so much.

" 'I swallowed it,' I said.

" 'Swallowed it?'

" 'Yes,' I said. 'Go away.'

"Then something happened which seems to me now more terrible than his desire to corrupt or my thoughtless act: he began to weep—the tears ran lopsidedly out of the one good eye and his shoulders shook. I only saw his face for a moment before he bent his head and strode off, the bald turnip head shaking, into the dark. When I think of it now, it's almost as if I had seen that Thing weeping for its inevitable defeat. It had tried to use me as a weapon, and now I had broken in its hands and it wept its hopeless tears through one of Blacker's eyes."

The black furnaces of Bedwell Junction gathered around the line. The points switched and we were tossed from one set of rails to another. A spray of sparks, a signal light changing to red, tall chimneys jetting into the grey night sky, the fumes of steam from stationary engines—half the cold journey was over, and now remained the long wait for the slow cross-country train. I said, "It's an interesting story. I think I should have given Blacker what he wanted. I wonder what he would have done with it."

"I really believe," my companion said, "that he would first of all have put it under his microscope—before he did all the other things I expect he had planned."

"And the hints," I said. "I don't quite see what you mean by that."

"Oh, well," he said vaguely, "you know for me it was an odd beginning, that affair, when you come to think of it," but I never should have known what he meant had not his coat, when he rose to take his bag from the rack, come open and disclosed the collar of a priest.

I said, "I suppose you think you owe a lot to Blacker."

"Yes," he said, "you see, I am a very happy man."

# Europe Now

ERIK VON KUEHNELT-LEDDIHN

RETURNING now to this country for a lecture tour and re-reading my "Letter from a Replaced Person" published a year ago, I cannot help feeling that though the situation in Europe may not have changed fundamentally from a *political* point of view, it is *humanly* an entirely different one. Long before I left I had ceased to gaze with morbid fascination at the Karawanken Mountains, the Iron Curtain, rising in stony silence and grandeur as an endless wall south of our home where I have just left my family; and

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I have become as used as the rest of the Austrians and Carinthians to expect, with a certain tiredness, the coming disaster. We all are now cozily settled at the brink of an abyss and we take our gloomy prospects not more seriously than a patient who had been given up by his doctors some time ago. We have built up a fairly clever system of mental escapes and they work quite well. The newspapers, reaching us at a place 9.5 miles from the horrors of a Popular People's Democracy, don't cause half the excitement they would in sheltered Kankakee or Kalamazoo. Berlin could as well be on the moon. The red tape, preventing everybody from getting there, places it truly at an astronomical distance. And then there's wishful thinking.

Yet my subjective feelings are not unique and almost everyone in Europe agrees with me that, for one reason or another, January 1st, 1948, was definitely a watershed. Everything before that date belonged organically to World War II, everything after it to an entirely different historial epoch, to the peace, to a second armistice or perhaps to World War III.

Today almost nobody is interested in the immediate past; the Nazi tyranny and World War II are gone and forgotten. The soldiers have ceased to talk about their experience and the former inmates of the concentration camps have become silent. Although there is a direct psychological connection between their actions, the memory of the war criminals is waning while the misdeeds of the peace criminals still look down on us as the pyramids on the Egyptians. Nobody wants to hear accounts from the prisoners of war, except if they come from the USSR. Only the mournful photographs of soldiers who have disappeared in Russian or Siberian camps without leaving trace—*spurlos verschwunden*—are still staring at one at the exits of railroad stations; notices below the pictures implore passersby to inform mothers, wives or brothers about their fate. And a few of these photos depict women, the *Wehrmacht* equivalent of Wacs and Waves, not to mention air raid wardens. There is a whole camp of such Austrians in Mecklemburg (according to the Socialist Information Service 700 of them) but they are practically unreturnable and physically dehumanized, though some of our "liberal" friends over here might insist that they have "at least sexual democracy." Yet the general interest has turned to the future and the trend is away from the past. In the meantime, the occupation has become an integral part of the local scene and the D.P.'s are slowly going to seed.

There has been an economic improvement in a whole score of countries and this is unfortunately not so much the result of a genuine increase in wealth as it is of the aid pumped into Europe from America. It still remains to be seen whether all this pumping will have a lasting effect, but it has done a great deal of good for the moment. It has saved lives. The improvement in countries like Austria or Holland, Italy or France, is visible to the naked eye. In some respects it is even startling. The monetary reforms have served their purpose but they were also death blows to the already dying middle class. As a matter of fact, practically nothing which has happened in the last 40 years has not been a nail in the coffin of this "backbone of democracy." Even the political movements which had pretended to alleviate their sufferings have knifed the middle class in the back. The Austrian working class today is not only relatively, but even absolutely better off than the white collar workers—a sociological trend which only the USSR is radically reversing by establishing a rigid hierarchy with classes, uniforms, distinctions and a whole system of segregation and discrimination of an exclusively Oriental pattern. Yet this hierarchy comprises a fairly broad middle class of a predominantly bureaucratic character which is placed well above the "toiling masses."

*

In spite of the clouds gathering all the time, there is a great deal of consolidation going on, but consolidation *per se* is not necessarily something the English college boy would call a "good thing." If a bone fracture is healing, it is still legitimate to ask whether the fragments are actually coalescing in the right order and whether as a result of this process the injured limb will be straight again. The "consolidation" following 1919 resulted in the temporary perpetuation of geographical and political monstrosities which in turn helped to produce the cataclysms of the nineteen thirties. The situation today is similar—but its negative aspects are far more obvious and even the blind can see the frightening result of the wrong decisions taken a few years ago. Still, there is a certain amount of well-being coming about here and there, and human existence becomes tolerable where it was unbearable nine months ago. People who were certain that they had to die are now convinced that they will be able to vegetate into the foreseeable future. More than that, buildings go up, railroad schedules improve, defunct institutions are revived; yet at the same time the tension also mounts and the Great Armistice is seemingly drawing to a close. There is a grim Finnish saying: *Kun talo on valmis tulee kuolema* which might be translated: "When the peasant completes the building of his farm, death will come." And this feeling is quite rampant. Again and again when praising an accomplishment of a community or an individual one gets that curious reaction, a phrase like: "Oh

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well, but you know . . . " or "Yes, it looks fine, but Heaven knows. . . . " These sentences are left unfinished in mid-air simply because the courage is lacking to discount all earthly hope. Yet it must be conceded that this dilemma is of a purely "cerebral" nature; if people actually *think*, they must know that the inevitable has to happen *unless* something quite unforeseeable intervenes and creates a basically new situation. (The Tito case was one of these minor miracles.) But the fact remains that we are not, whatever certain Neo-Thomists believe, purely cerebral creatures and that Pascal's dictum *"Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison même ne connaît pas,"* still stands. At the bottom of their hearts practically nobody believes in World War III (nor, to be frank, do I), but most unfortunately your American vistas from the World's Great Balcony are infinitely more rational and objective than ours. Your hysteria is far more justified than our calm.

★

The position of the Church has been strengthened and has been growing ever since the end of the war. The growth is sometimes only spiritual rather than political and perhaps it is only *relative;* if all skyscrapers would tumble down in New York people would discover that St. Patrick's is a big building after all. And not only the height of the spires would impress people, but also the fact that this particular structure still stands while the others have actually crumbled. I don't think that I am going out on a limb when I say that these decades are seeing the collapse of the whole ideology of the French Revolution proper (though a couple of derivatives are still going strong) and that not much of Protestantism *as we know it* will be left in another 30 or 40 years. The non-vital elements of Protestantism will be submerged in agnosticism, the vital ones will either rapidly approach Catholicism or return to the original position Protestantism held in the 16th century where they will be engaged in a new-old dialogue with Rome—a dialogue whose outcome nobody can foresee. Catholicism looms so large on the European Scene that Scandinavia is the only place where its ubiquity is not felt. Yet all its cushions and pillows have gone, there is nothing to "cover" this completely naked Catholicism standing in solitary grandeur in the Old World; all the pads and buffers which consisted of a whole cluster of ideas, traditions and institutions that once surrounded its structure have gone and the timid believer often wonders how well the Church is going to withstand the coming storms. All he can say now is an anything but cheerful, "So far, so good." And it must also be admitted that a battlefield strewn with corpses, even if these are our enemies, is not conducive to cheerfulness or an exuberant faith in the future; there lie the corpses of Monsieur Jean-Jacques, of Messrs. Adam Smith and David Hume, of Herr Nietzsche and Feuerbach. (Karl Marx still stands in all splendor but if you look closely he's as dead as a doornail, and has been cleverly mounted by a taxidermist and wears the insignia of the Golden Horde while in his bushy beard are traces of Sauce Tartare.)

This looks like a surrealist still-life but that's precisely what Europe has become at the centenary of 1848; from the real chaos of the first three post war years we stepped into some fearful unreality, with well-sized treelets growing from the roofless top-floors of German cities while the weeds carpet the streets in once German-speaking hill towns of Bohemia and Moravia. (Yet one really has to see them at night when the moon spreads its ghostly light over deserted hospitals and windowless shops with bats fluttering in and out of their black vaults.) Nor must one forget the nude mountains of Germany, brutally, selfishly and stupidly deforested by the occupation authorities thus creating problems of a vertiginous magnitude for this and for coming generations. And the climatic changes resulting from this murderous folly might still be fatal to *all* of *us*. Contemplating these material possibilities one has also to remember Juenger's more spiritual lament: "The desert grows, the desert grows, woe to him who carries deserts in himself!" Yes, the deserts over there are "inside" and "outside."

Still, the Church has a few new allies in this desert. So many illusions have crumbled, not only among the masses but even among intellectuals and one of them relates to the rash judgment that Protestantism stands for liberty and Catholicism for authority. This statement is correct if we think of something as material as our ecclesiastic organization, yet the reverse will be true if we have in mind the original theologies—and only these count! Therefore there's nothing surprising in the fact that the new liberalism, purified of its Manchesterian illusions and the Voltairian superstitions, had been moving in the direction of Rome as a *sedes libertatis*. If we speak about this new liberalism we must realize that this is not mass-movement but merely an intellectual beginning which now starts to get shape and content. It consciously draws from Christian sources and it even has, *given time*, a chance to achieve a broader basis. There is also a definite libertarian trend discernible among Catholic thinkers and a true thirst for liberty among the masses. Yet the masses are, naturally, torn between the cry for bread, which often implies regimentation and control, and the thirst for liberty. This conflict *in an emergency* can be insoluble and creates a new *malaise*.

Yet how far things have gone in Western Europe is evidenced by a recent special number of the Swiss Masonic monthly *Alpina* which in three

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weighty articles proposed nothing less than an open alliance between the Catholic Church and Free Masonry against the forces of materialism and totalitarianism. These articles (written by the Genevan Historian François Ruchon, the Swiss Grandmaster Albert Natural and the Calvinist minister Boeni) are more than a mere straw in the wind. Partly they are an answer to the book *Le Franc Maçonnerie et l'Eglise Catholique* by Father Bertheloot S.J., a book which carefully surveyed the ground for a possible cooperation.

Yet in Eastern Europe the Catholic Church has become the "Counterstate" and the focus of *all* anti-Communist forces in a far more concrete form than in the West. There the counterstates are actually "bishoprics"—officially Messrs. Bierut, Gottwald and Rákosi are ruling the Muscovite satrapies, but the uncrowned, moral rulers are the princes of the Church.

*

But let us leave these searchings into situations and political forms and get down to this urgent question. Let us ask what policy a Christian can advocate towards the USSR. Here we must start with the statement that he *certainly cannot* favor a sudden atomic aggression overnight, a blitzkrieg wiping out indiscriminately the guilty and the innocent. This is the one thing he cannot do. I'm not a hypocrite and I would have to confess that I would feel an immense relief if the nightmare were thus obliterated; I would shed tears of joy—and at the same time tears of shame and repentance over my selfishness. Yet the motives of the pagan ego are always one thing and our responsible actions and words quite another. For the latter we will have to give an exact account some day, while of the *first* reactions of our "hearts" we may conceivably be innocent.

On the other hand I consider the opposite attitude almost equally criminal, i.e. to hand over Western Europe to the USSR on a platter and to reconquer the Old World via Spain and Britain. I am not only speaking individually when I say that you cannot afford to leave the Communists in control of the bulk of Western Europe, even for a month, and thus to give them a chance to "clean it out." We have the greatest difficulty in reconstructing Germany because the toll of valuable human elements the Nazis have taken in the last two years of the war is so tremendous that we are faced by a gap which hardly can ever be bridged. The Catholic Church would be the main target of Communist persecution which during a war would have a quite different character than right now—just as the gassing and cremating of the Nazis was reserved for the time when everything hung in the balance and they had nothing to lose. Culturally we could not survive a second Night of the Long Knives. Whether you like it or not, the intellectual gradations of our societies are steep and therefore these can be easily "decapitated." With a devastated Continent and starving hordes half eaten by atomic ulcers and with intellectual zombies repeating the Preamble of the Declaration you will not be able to build up Europe. You will have to "liberate" it nevertheless. (Remember the current Viennese joke: "We sure could stand a Third World War but not a second liberation!") You will have to "liberate" it for the simple reason of self-protection because the 2 billion Old Worlders outnumber the 200 million of the New World in the proportion of 10 to 1. The only reasonable thing to do is to arm to the teeth, to occupy and fortify every free nook and corner of Europe. And then stand by, don't yield, keep cool, reconstruct, lay down the word where this is needed (it is often needed because there exists a lot of Old World nonsense) but adapt your ways where your own notions make no sense. You are the unifiers so you have the right (and even the duty) to be energetic and commanding, you run the show—but use circumspection, make friends and not vassals, prefer critics to adulators. And don't start a war and don't arrange incidents. Probably we will have to fight after all, but we are not absolutely certain. Recent developments have shown that there are chinks in the armor of the tyrants. The virtue of prudence may be the last one among the *virtutes intellectuales*—courage is higher—but often it comes in quite handy. But it must be attached to fortitude.

*

The alternative is not very cheerful. The shape of things to come can, perhaps, best be gleaned from the happenings in Boldogkövarja; the owners of this Hungarian castle live as D.P.'s in Austria and the gypsies broke into the deserted buildings. They have a practical eye and soon discovered a couple of second-rate Velasquez and Titians which they cut from their frames. It was obvious that the canvas could be usefully employed, so they brought a big kettle from the kitchen, hacked the Louis XV furniture to pieces and made a big, comfortable fire in one of the *salons*. The "masters" ended as boiled and discolored rags in the kettle and finally emerged as shoes on the feet of the wily gypsies. This may serve as a preview of the new hierarchy of values after World War III.

Of course, some people consider this picture far too optimistic. They either expect the survival of humming insects desperately in search for plants, or visualize glowing fragments of this planet being hurled in fantastic speed through the endlessness of space.

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# Communications

## THE OUTSTRETCHED FIST

Kansas City, Mo.

TO the Editors: Mr. Philip Burnham's article on *The Nation* in the current issue of THE COMMONWEAL is pertinent and timely. The muddle-headed reasoning, and the slipshod deviations from truth of those who ostensibly preach their devotion to facts and logic should be revealed as frequently as possible.

A recent issue of *The Nation* carries an article by Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, in which he castigates Catholics for forming their own Catholic organizations. This is the same Bishop Oxnam who is such a prominent member of Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. I have never been able to plumb the depths of the dissimulation that the phrase "Protestants and Other Americans" holds, but I assume that it has enough to form a cover for the Bishop's answer to this one. I am glad that no one was sly enough to think of such a title as "Catholic and Other American War Veterans."

Mr. Burnham mentions the petition, "An Appeal to Reason and Conscience," which appeared in *The Nation* of October 16, 1948, signed by 107 prominent Americans, and protesting the ban of *The Nation* in the New York Public Schools. The October 23 issue of *The Nation* carried an editorial in which it was reported that one of the defenses against the petition by the New York City Superintendent of Schools was that "Probably many of the signers (of the petition) have not read all of the articles (by Paul Blanshard)". *The Nation* answered this charge by saying that "to quibble over who signed what is to degrade the argument," and claimed that "what is involved here, rather, is a principle: shall the sensitivities of any special-interest group justify censorship of responsible journalism?"

It might surprise some people, who have felt the artificial heat of *The Nation's* burning for facts and logic, to face the cold, swift twist of this mental somersault. It seems to me that it is very important to know who signed what, to know whether the signers have read the articles under discussion. The principle involved is the protection of responsible journalism from censorship by the school board. The fly in the ointment is "responsible journalism." How shall we know whether an article is responsible journalism, if we haven't read it? Is *The Nation* trying to imply that a school board has no right to keep journalism out of its schools if that journalism is irresponsible? How can censorship of articles be denounced on the principle that responsible journalism should not be censored, unless the articles have been read first to determine whether or not they are responsible journalism?

What is *The Nation* trying to say: that it wants us to see that it has the bludgeon of 107 prominent signatures, to keep our eyes steady on those signatures, and close them to the imperfections of *The Nation's* logic?

DUANE FLAHERTY.

New York, N. Y.

TO the Editors: A healthy indignation such as the one of Philip Burnham's article on *The Nation* (THE COMMONWEAL, Jan. 21, 1949) is very pleasing in so far as one gets tired of Christians always "taking it lying down." Only I cannot help wishing this fine display of righteous anger had not been directed at *The Nation*. First, for sheer psychological reasons: it makes *The Nation* most interesting. Second, and foremost, for Christian reasons.

It is not necessary to nourish illusions about communism in order to lay the present-day damage, first, at our own door. We shall never repeat too often Berdiaeff's words: "Communism . . . the evidence of the unfulfilled tasks of Christianity."

The worst enemies of Christianity are not the communists or Paul Blanshard. They are the Christians themselves who have turned Christianity into an opiate, a disguised slavery. Had we lived the bold message of Christ to all men would we reap the harvest of today?

Of course, there is now, as of old, the ever recurrent persecution of Christ, whether under the form of persecution of the Jews or of the Christians. But that is far from being the whole story. It is not mostly for our faithfulness that we are paying, but for centuries of betrayal of Christ, whether by ourselves or our forebears. The people wanted bread and we gave them stones in a hundred different ways. And now the people are rising and turning against us, violently and with ruthless injustice. We had it coming to us—the persecution of the Orthodox, Stepinac, Mindszenty, etc. And likely the good ones are paying for the bad ones. But it is the same responsibility, the Christian responsibility.

If we were persecuted because of our faithfulness, as in the first centuries, we would not waste our time organizing feverishly against communism. It is our subconscious sense of guilt and its consequence, fear, which push us in that direction, in big or small matters, including the suppression of *The Nation*. It is no use saying the pitiful record of the Christians is only a pretext for the persecutors. Please God that pretext could not be used!

This does not mean the antagonists are right. It does not mean we have "to take it lying down." It means we have to take *first* our share of culpability as Christians, we or our forebears, in whatever happens these days. This is one of our few chances left of saving our honor as Christians. Probably it will not save our heads, nor any other Christians' of this generation, but at least it will help maintain honesty in the atmosphere, that which, no matter what others do, will permit authentic Christianity to survive.

CLAIRE HUCHET BISHOP.

## A REQUEST

Rochester 12, N. Y.

TO the Editors: I am collecting materials for a history of the North American College, Rome, Italy. Among the sources of information, diaries and letters written by former students and staff members during the time of their connection with the college, are of prime importance.

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It has been especially difficult to obtain such documents for the earlier years of the college's history, from 1859 to 1900. If any of your readers have access to papers of this description, may I please request the loan of them? When the pertinent data have been copied, I shall return the manuscripts promptly and gratefully.

REV. ROBERT F. MCNAMARA,
*Professor of Church History,*
*St. Bernard's Seminary.*

## The Stage & Screen

### *All For Love*

IT SEEMS to me if I could have had more vaudeville experience, I would be better able to discuss this Lambert-Farrell revue intelligently. However, as has been tediously reiterated in this column, the days of the Palace were before me, and I don't think I am smart at analyzing why a sketch hits the bull's-eye and why it does not. Nevertheless, there is more in this production than just a miss-fired show. It introduces a new and eager producer to the Street, and it re-opens a comfortable useful theatre exactly in the midst of the big-time. Perhaps batting a few formula ideas back and forth here will be of some use to someone, and certainly to me by way of definition.

Two weeks ago in a report of the meteoric "Kiss Me Kate," I hazarded the opinion that an intelligent book was fifty percent responsible for the delights of the piece and the excellence of Cole Porter's work. So much for Musical Comedy. For a Revue, on the other hand, it is surely only talent which rings the bell. In a Revue, one, two, or ten people come before a curtain to sing, step, or quip for an adjusted time, and then they exit for the benefit of another one, two or ten. These performers are exactly as good as their material, and their material, in turn, must depend upon their talents: their specialties. It is true there ought, in a good Revue, to be an allover attack, a line, to which all material can be hinged and all music tuned to. Mr. Farrell's movers have overlooked this point, but that is not the least of their stupidities. They have cast badly throughout, and they have miss-used and miss-written their three stars completely. As the show spins, Grace and Paul Hartman and Bert Wheeler are surrounded by a group of young people who ought to be gardening, accounting, knitting or cooking—*anything* rather than costing people tickets. Their material does not support them simply because they have nothing to be supported. Some of them can sing, a few can dance, but not enough and not well enough. And regarding the principals, it is obvious that these three stalwarts are utterly confused. The Hartman's do no dancing at all and each of their sketches is dependent upon the old vaudeville blackout technique where the last line carries the point and should have the punch of the best of O'Henry. But the punch is rarely there, and most of all, the blackout is not there: a slow curtain slowly descends. Their props are, in the main, intriguing, but even in a deep-sea-diving

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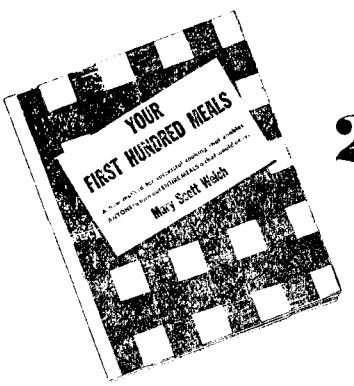
**BY MARY SCOTT WELCH**

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deal including helmets and a lovely arrangement of flying cardboard fish, one gets the impression that everyone is too utterly bored to explore any of these traps imaginatively. Wheeler comes off slightly better in an inspired parody of Robert Morley's "Edward" and he's also pretty funny as a Lady Wrestler, but that's all. I suppose the most expensive education in the modern scene will be that of an inspiring Producer. It's to be hoped that his present venture will not have cost Mr. Farrell too much. I think if he will only lend an ear to "Lend An Ear" a little further down the town, he should be able to come up with an original, and certainly brighter, revue for his new theatre. (*at the Mark Hellinger*)

### *Carousel*

A fresh, sparkling and well-cast revival of the Rodgers-Hammerstein show is now delighting the City Center audiences and will be doing so for the next two weeks. (*at the City Center*)

KAPPO PHELAN.

## So Dear to the Box Office

MOVIES about home and security attract people to theaters by the droves; so this week's three new items should have customers falling all over each other to see these pictures that spell love in various ways.

In *"A Letter to Three Wives,"* the heroines are just leaving on a boat to go up the Hudson River for a day's outing with a gang of orphans, when they receive a letter from their town's most beautiful siren who informs them that she is about to run off with one of their husbands. It is too late to turn back so the wives go on the outing, and each wonders all day if her husband is the one. Flashbacks show why each wife has reason to feel insecure about her marriage: pretty Jeanne Crain, because she feels inadequate with the flashy country club set to which her husband (Jeffrey Lynn) belongs; attractive Ann Sothern, because she knows her husband (Kirk Douglas) resents her giving so much time to a radio job that is gradually separating them; and flashy Linda Darnell, because she knows that her husband (Paul Douglas) knows how she snagged him in the first place. These flashbacks make up the main part of this movie which Joseph L. Mankiewicz has directed expertly. Miss Crain's problems seem a little superficial, but Miss Sothern's are handled adroitly, and Miss Darnell's so realistically that the film builds up like a first-rate mystery. The acting, particularly that of Sothern, Darnell and the two Douglas boys (who are not brothers) is excellent. Of course it would be unfair to tell you the solution; by the time you hear it, you are really worked up to quite a pitch. Much of this is due to the film's fine cinema qualities and much comes from the feeling of warmth and interest in home and security that is built up by the characters. It is seldom that a movie, which could easily be classified as a woman's picture, has so many good, all-around features to attract you.

The same cannot be said of *"My Own True Love"* which deserves recommendation for trying to be constructive with some post-war problems, but gets so involved in pretentious talkiness and superficial solutions that it is hard to take the film seriously. As a film, it has Val Lewton's excellent production, the good direction of Compton Bennett and several outstanding performances, especially those of Phyllis Calvert, Philip Friend and Melvyn Douglas; but its attitude toward the permanence of love and marriage gets a bit shaky and wanders farther and farther from reality as the plot progresses. The main situation is built around a father who discovers that his wounded son has fallen in love with the same woman that the older man intends to marry. It is unfortunate that the script falls down so badly, because this good cast could have made a top-notch post-war movie with the material involved. Now the piece stands as an exercise in good acting—with a sprinkling of third-rate ideas.

*"So Dear To My Heart"* may not have any first-rate ideas but it does have some very nice warmed-over epigrams and remembrances of things past.

Walt Disney's new opus is just right for anyone who wants a good cry over the dear departed good old days, complete with home and mother—or I should say grandmother. This is the story (based on Sterling North's novel) about a little boy who lives in a small Indiana town with his grandmother. He raises a black lamb through thick and thin (no small job this) and finally gets a blue ribbon—not for raising the best sheep, but for doing the fine job he did with what he had. This may sound pretty sappy, and some of it is; but Mr. Disney knows how far to go with sentiment, and this time he went just far enough to bring a few tears to your eyes before he turns on the humor and has you laughing and waiting for the next teary situation. Harold Schuster has directed his cast well: Bobby Driscoll as the boy, Beulah Bondi as his grandmother, Burl Ives as the singing blacksmith who puts over some very good songs (you know "Lavender Blue" already) with the help of the animated figures that turn up every now and then to add to the sentiment and fun. I should have preferred more cartoons, but being a push-over for this nostalgic stuff, I can't complain too much. Anyway any film that introduces a cartoon character as wonderful as the Scotch spider who inspires Bruce deserves applause.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

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# CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### *What Is People's Democracy?*

"PEOPLE'S democracy" in the East European countries is being increasingly identified with "Marxism-Leninism":

1. *In Poland, Boleslaw Bierut,* President of the Republic and Secretary of the Communist Party, declared at the Party Convention: "People's democracy in Poland is one of the specific features of the Marxist-Leninist path to socialism, a path blazed for the first time in the history of mankind by the victorious proletariat of Russia. . . . People's democracy is a specific form of revolutionary power which has arisen in the new historic conditions of our epoch; it is an expression of a new correlation of class forces on an international scale."

2. *In Hungary,* Vice Premier and Communist Party boss *Matyas Rakosi* stated in an article: "A people's democracy is, according to its function, a dictatorship of the proletariat without the Soviet form. The people's democracies, and among them the Hungarian people's democracy, are in a position to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat without the Soviet form because they can base themselves on the great Soviet Union. . . . The dictatorship of the proletariat, Stalin said 25 years ago, is, exactly like any other dictatorship, a means to suppress resistance of the class enemy. The proletarian State is an apparatus for the suppression of the bourgeoisie."

3. *In Bulgaria,* Prime Minister *Georgi Dimitrov* told the Communist Party Convention: "The People's Democratic State is a State in the transitional period, destined to ensure the development of the country along the road to Socialism. . . . This is possible only by waging relentless class struggle against the capitalist elements for their complete liquidation. . . . Under the invincible banner of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin, let us march onward to Socialism and Communism!" (New York, 1/29—CIP.)

### *Eye-Witness Inside Hungary*

DETAILS of the methods by which signatures for statements protesting against Cardinal Mindszenty were obtained even among Catholic high school students in Hungary are given in a letter just received here by the bulletin *East Europe,* edited by Lady Judith Listowel. The letter writer left Budapest one day before Cardinal Mindszenty's arrest. He stated that, except for the Communist minority, "Everyone knows that the evidence against the Cardinal is worthless."

"The son of a friend of mine is a pupil of the Maurinum College, a High School at Pecs, run by the Cistercian Order. One night, representatives of the student council, naturally Communist, woke up the boys. They went from dormitory to dormitory, and placed before each boy four forms of protest against the Cardinal. The first demanded that Cardinal Mindszenty be condemned to death, the second that he be imprisoned, the third that he be deported, the fourth that he be exiled to Rome. Each boy was told: 'If you don't sign any of these forms, it will be evident that you are no democrat, yet only good democrats have a right to study at a university. If you do not sign, you cannot continue your studies. But it will also reveal that you have not been brought up as a democrat, so if you don't sign, your family will have to bear the consequences.'

"Despite these threats, 39 of the 120 boys refused to sign. But the 'result' was heralded in the 'democratic' (Communist) Press as a 'unanimous and spontaneous demonstration against the Cardinal.' . . .

"Party members have taken over the banks, factories, businesses, hotels, theaters, shop—everywhere. The standard of manners, cleanliness and efficiency has been deliberately lowered to the level of a Russian town. And everywhere Russian soldiers, Political Police, Communist militia, ordinary police. Budapest was a sinister place. . . ." (London, 1/28—CIP.)

### *Fight on Rumanian Eastern Rite Priests*

APPROXIMATELY 600 Catholic priests of the Eastern Rite are held at present in Rumanian prisons, and more than 500 are hiding in the forests and the mountains, CIP has just learned from a well-informed source inside Rumania. About 300 of the priests are imprisoned at Ajud, Transylvania, about 30 Canons of various Catholic cathedrals are under arrest in a monastery in Moldavia, 6 Bishops are in the monastery of Dragoslave near Campu-Lung; the others are held in smaller groups in prisons throughout the country.

The Bishops, according to the same Rumanian source, have been visited several times by Patriarch Justinian Marina of the Rumanian Orthodox Church who endeavored to persude them by promises and threats to recognize the "merger" of the Catholic Church of the Eastern Rite in Rumania (with about 1½ million members) with the Rumanian Orthodox Church. The fact that the Canons, who include Rectors of Seminaries, Diocesan Chancellors, etc., are not held in ordinary prisons, but in a monastery, would seem to indicate that they are objects of similar endeavors by Orthodox Church dignitaries. (Rome, 1/24—CIP.)

### *Ukrainian Bishops' New Place of Imprisonment "Unknown"*

THREE Ukrainian Catholic Bishops, arrested by the Soviet Secret Police in 1945 and imprisoned until recently at the concentration camp of Voluka, North of the Arctic circle, are now at an "unknown" address, according to the Russian police. This was learned when relief packages sent to the Bishops in October, 1948, were returned with a notification from the police that the present whereabouts of the Bishops is "unknown."

The prisoners were arrested by the Soviet Secret Police as part of the liquidation of the Catholic Church in the territories of the Polish Ukraine annexed by the Soviet Union. At first imprisoned at Kiev, they were later taken to Voluka, just West of the Ural Mountains, where the prison population is estimated at several million.

While it is possible that the Bishops are dead, or have been transferred to another place of imprisonment, the date of the "unknown" notice has caused speculation that the Bishops may be kept "incommunicado" in retaliation for the assassination of Orthodox Bishop Gabriel Kostelnik of Lvov on September 21, 1948. Father Kostelnik became a Bishop of the Orthodox Church following his apostasy from the Catholic Church.

Arrested with the three Bishops in 1945 were two other Ukrainian Catholic Bishops who have since died in captivity. (The Hague, 1/24—CIP.)

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# OF NOTE

### *Reason and Love*

IN THE first issue (January) of the "New Series of *The Month,* published by the English Jesuits and available from British Publications, Inc., 150 East 35th Street, New York 16, N. Y., Rev. M. C. D'Arcy, S. J., author of *The Mind and Heart of Love,* begins an article on "The Clown and the Philosopher:

> At a decisive period of thought Aristotle laid it down that the distinguishing mark of man was reason. He who lives by reason is mostly truly man; he is balanced in judgment, in control of himself and wise. This doctrine is generally accepted as the outstanding contribution by the Greeks to our Western civilization. We are civilized, like the Hellenes, because we control passion by reason. The Barbarian is he who is at the mercy of his emotions and passions. The signal, therefore, of the return of barbarism is the attack on reason accompanied by protests in favor of will or some other demonic power.
>
> Now if this analysis were correct then the campaign against reason by Existentialists and other thinkers and leaders today would look ominous. But while it is true that no civilization can endure which disparages the cold light of reason, we have to beware of treating all outside reason as jungle and darkness. The *anima* of man may be wild and untaught and, when left to itself, easily distraught, but we know that in Christianity it was taken captive by Divine Love, and that the charity of which Saint Paul and Saint John wrote opened up a new life of which Greece had no inkling. Moreover this life of charity has been far more potent than any system of reason in developing and conserving civilization.
>
> Reason acting by itself has, it must be admitted, turned inevitably into an inhuman rationalism, and time and time again the very dryness of this rationalism has sent men questing for another and more intimate kind of wisdom. Rationalism starves certain sides of human life, and it is these repressed desires which are reappearing in one disguise or another in modern literature, art and thought. . . .

★

IN THE January 23 issue of *Orate Fratres,* published every four weeks at the Benedictine Abbey of St. John's, Collegeville, Minn., Rev. William H. Russell of the religious education department at Catholic University, Washington, D. C., and author of "Christ Our Leader," declares in "Where Are the Nine?":

> . . . The theology of the seminary manuals does not make the seminarian thrill with thoughts of praise of God. The Church has made mandatory in the training of the priest the philosophical, Thomistic approach to God. The Church has not made mandatory the approach of Saint Francis of Assisi. My first suggestion is that writers on the liturgy pay more attention to Christ's approach to God—*a loving Father.*
>
> Recently I attended a lecture by a theologian on the subject of making God "real" to the people. He started off by showing that we know He is an infinitely perfect Being. Not once did he suggest that we use the term Father. Now, human nature often shies away from the abstract notion of perfection. Moreover the metaphysical idea of being is cold; the idea of Father is warm. What Christ had in mind when He used the term "heavenly Father is perfect" was generosity, all-embracing charity, eternal giving.
>
> In theology the aim is to produce an argumentative, error-hunting mind. Need we be surprised if a praising mind does not ensue, a mind that sees the good and gives God the credit? We are trained to *prove,* not to praise.
>
> This is the type of mind that is brought to the liturgy. At the beginning of each year I make it a practice to have the students give me their idea of God. The board will be covered with such words as Creator, Judge, Last End, Being infinitely perfect, omniscience, omnipotence, power, He Who is. Sometimes I get such words as Goodness, heaven. But very seldom do I get the word Father. Now, is it not strange that multitudes who theoretically daily say the Our Father are not accustomed to think of God as a loving Father? Apparently no one has seen fit to train the people in the "philosophy" of the Our Father. Even in the catechisms we use the metaphysical idea of being. Our constant dinning of the philosophical approach to God has resulted in God being pushed far off, or being thought of as a cold proposition. By way of contrast, listen to Christ: "I have manifested thy name. . . . Just Father, the world has not known Thee, but I have known Thee. . . . And I have made known to them Thy name, and will make it known, in order that the love with which Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:6, 25-26). . . .

* * *

The liturgy is God-centered. Fine. But the tendency in moral and ascetic theology is to make the individual self-centered by placing emphasis on his self-perfection first. Moreover the self is set up as the model for our treatment of our neighbor, when, as a matter of fact, Christ is the model—"That *as I have loved you,* you also love one another" (John 13:35). Also the liturgy is social, yet the claim of some theologians is that the theology of the manuals is individualistic.

Since Christ was God-centered and neighbor-centered, since the Our Father is social, would it not help the liturgical movement to have more articles dealing with this principle: "Seek *first* the kingdom of God and His Justice, and all these things shall be given you besides" (Mt. 6:33)? The principle is: First *give* (offer, praise, adore) and in the second place seek to "get." The structure of the Our Father and of the Mass show this principle. The paradox in Christianity is that *self-development* comes when it is not directly sought. The purpose of life is to be a credit to our Father. It is *outside the self.* It is not "to save my soul." People can be made generous and unselfish.

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# Books

*Transformation In Christ. On the Christian Attitude of Mind. Dietrich von Hildebrand. Longmans.* $4.50.

HILDEBRAND needs no recommendation for this book, which was first published under a pen name to prevent confiscation by the Nazis. Nor is there a doubt about the excellence of its English version. It is one of those books that you keep on hand, like the *Imitation of Christ* or Saint Francis de Sales' *Philothea.* This does not mean that it is only a re-hash or stream-lined version of the same old thing—by no means! Hildebrand's book is written with the intention of avoiding being sucked into the wake of the spiritual movements to which we owe the other books. This book is a legitimate offspring of the "ontological" and liturgical movement and a successful attempt to go back to the sources: the Gospel, the Fathers, the liturgy, always having in mind men and women of our own day. Hildebrand's learning as a philosopher, his profound familiarity with the great spiritual masters and mystics, with Saint Thomas and with the psyche of modern man, make this book a rare guide for all Catholics.

Hildebrand is a convert from paganism, from fin-de-siecle atmosphere; he is a layman, a family father, a husband and one who saw Totalitarianism in the raw. These facts give the book a practical, real attitude which we miss in so many "spiritual directions." It is also a very sane and wholesome book. The only complaint I have is its length.

What the educated man and woman will appreciate in his book is its rational and honest courage. So many of our ascetic writers leave us with the impression that knowledge and brains are *ipso facto* an evil in spiritual life, something due to the "Devotio moderna" misunderstood (or is it?), and that to be a good Christian all you have to have is a good heart and good will. The praise of the little ones by Our Lord is thus twisted into something that He never meant and one wonders how Saint Thomas ever got to heaven! The heritage of Newman is by far not yet minted into coin in our colleges, in spite of Maritain, Joseph Pieper, Guardini and our own John L. Spalding. This book fulfils a great mission: it takes the bad odor out of the academic gowns of Catholics. To those of our educated and thinking laymen who want to be more than mediocre hangers-on in their Church: here is your man!

H. A. REINHOLD.

*Theodore Dreiser. Apostle of Nature. Robert Elias. Knopf.* $4.

IN A BOOK where the persistence of conditional sentences makes the writer appear as uncertain and doubtful as his subject, Robert Elias has described the life and the thoughts of Theodore Dreiser.

Member of an unconventional family (his father was a non-working, pietistic Catholic; one of his Bohemian brothers was Paul Dresser who wrote the popular songs *On the Banks of the Wabash* and *My Gal, Sal,* and who lived with the madam of a house of prostitution; two of his sisters began street-walking early and soon aligned themselves with men without going through the formality of marriage) Dreiser achieved notice as a newspaper writer and author of *Sister Carrie.* Later, chiefly by reason of *An American Tragedy* and numerous comments on social conditions he was looked on as a kind of patriarch of American writers.

He comes out of this book no better and no worse than he actually was; all the fluctuations, contradictions and absurdities together with a certain indefinite dramatic power which are the result of a determinist's speculations about causes and his curiosity about human actions are evident in this book. And it is not difficult to anticipate the declivity of this somewhat sorrowful man to his bathos where he spoke to snakes and signed membership papers in the Communist Party.

Dreiser's novels were expanded versions of real events, without distinction in form or style. His early reputation came mainly as a result of his depiction of certain unpleasant phases of life which held some fascination for him, and which indicate, in a way, his real attitude toward society and the world. He was called an agent of naturalism, and, although his first books did not have many sales, his efforts enabled him to win editorial jobs on New York magazines. As editor of the *Delineator* he made writers "sit before him nervous and trembling, shifting uncomfortably." On the *Bohemian* he was associated with H. L. Mencken.

The social comments of Dreiser are shallow things prompted, one suspects, by intellectual snobbery (he spoke of "crude, asinine, illusioned Americans"; Pennsylvania miners depressed him by their "sullen, defeated expressions —by the discrepancy between their efforts and their perception"; and he thought that "Mind . . . was the distinguishing thing in life") by obstinacy and petulance (the *American Spectator* offered the "opportunity for the untrammelled expression of individual opinion, ignoring what is accepted and may be taken for granted in favor of the unaccepted and misunderstood.") His shifting and inconsistent inclinations led him at one time to write in favor of the killing of the criminal and the insane, and in one of his more cosmic moments he claimed that "Society" and "God" not the murderous should ask forgiveness. Dreiser was never concerned with persons, only with "individuals" beset by "powers," and after all his protests and denunciations his basic reconciliation was with that vague, sentimental, and not always pleasant activity, "Living." Beside such a social-artist as Bloy, or Peguy, or Gill, or Bernanos, Dreiser is like a pale, ineffectual, morning moon facing a brazen, apocalyptic, noonday sun.

Mr. Elias has drawn out of Dreiser's writings and conversations the essential pronouncements; he understands the contradictions (though he sometimes gives the impression of wishing that he did not) and any objection to the lack of logic and profundity in this book should be made not against Elias, but against Dreiser.

GEORGE MILES.

*Insight and Outlook. Arthur Koestler. Macmillan.* $5.

THE Author of *Insight and Outlook* is, of course, a novelist of considerable skill, and a man who has lived out the consequences of his intellectual convictions, not in the study, but in the wars and prison camps of Europe. The appearance of volume one (volume two is in preparation, and is to be published next year) of this rather ambitious *Summa* is an occasion of surprise to those who had no hint of it, especially since the novel has heretofore seemed so admirable and successful a means of expression for Mr. Koestler.

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**GROWTH OR DECLINE**

By Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard

**Fides Publishers South Bend 1, Ind.**

Though it is not referred to as such, *Insight and Outlook* may be regarded as a general effort to substantiate and fortify the intellectual positions advanced in the novels. But the total effect of the book, simply as a vehicle of ideas, is considerably less real, less whole, less convincing, than the total effect of one of the better novels, in the sense that "poetic incompleteness" expresses much more than rational enlargement: we are willing to understand more through the novel than through any justification of it. Thus if Mr. Koestler, in the person of one of his fictional characters, chooses to ruminate poetically on the organismic tendencies of social wholes, we do not protest; but when, in *Insight and Outlook,* he coolly advocates the merging of biology and sociology, we have reason to suspect his whole point of view. From mechanism Mr. Koestler has flown to organism; and Rubashov is explained, not in terms of the philosopher or the saint or even of the human being, but in terms of the amoeba.

Subtitled "An Inquiry Into the Common Foundations of Science, Art and Social Ethics," *Insight and Outlook* is developed on a purely natural or biological plane, with aggressive and indiscriminate extensions into realms of specifically human activity. Mr. Koestler, though he has broken with philosophic materialism, disavows any "metaphysical bias" and has drawn his two most active hypotheses (bisociation, self-assertion and self-transcendence) out of the fecund, if slightly poisonous, earth of modern psychology. The integrative and "self-transcending" tendencies of organic life are seen as primordial patterns for the creative efforts of man, for the advances and regressions of history, and for the phenomena of human society. From an exhaustive analysis of laughter and humor Mr. Koestler has elicited the psychological concept of "bisociation"—the association of two "operative fields" not habitually related; all creative achievements, whether in art, humor, or science, proceed from such an unhabitual relation: the highest poetry, therefore, would seem to stem from the same functional process as the obscene joke.

The leap, or rather the lack of a leap, from protoplasm to man, from biology to philosophy, from science to ethics, is, to say the least, naïve; and for this statement Mr. Koestler would charge me with a "humanistic bias." But while one cannot sympathize with such a book as *Insight and Outlook,* one can understand Mr. Koestler's need to write it. If we consider the author's total (and almost fatal) involvement in the complex of human actions, we are inclined to be more generous with his effort to reduce these actions to some sort of intelligibility, some comprehensible pattern; and we are also inclined to understand more fully the present need for withdrawal, reflection and contemplation among modern thinkers and artists who attempt any general assessment of man and his works.

J. H. JOHNSTON.

*Satyagraha: The Power of Truth. R. R. Diwarkar. Regnery. $2.*

THIS IS the best study of Gandhi's methods and philosophy which has yet been published in this country, and it is an admirable account of perhaps the only positive achievement of the twentieth century: the success of a non-violent method for the first time in modern history. As Gandhi himself said at Kingsley Hall, in London, during the Round Table conference

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in 1931, "the reason for the struggle, which has drawn the attention of the world, does not lie in the fact that we Indians are fighting for our liberty, but in the fact that the means adopted by us have not been adopted by any other people of whom we have a record. The means adopted are not bloodshed, not violence, nor diplomacy as one understands it nowadays. They are purely and simply truth and non-violence." How severely practical Satyagraha is, and how all-embracing the ascetic training imposed on all who would use such a method and make it successful, is well brought out, and, indeed, this might be considered an essential manual for would-be non-cooperators.

ANNE FREMANTLE.

*Literary History of the United States. Ed.: Spiller, Thorpe, Johnson, Canby. 3 Vols. Macmillan. $20.00.*

"EACH GENERATION should produce at least one literary history of the United States, for each generation must define the past in its own terms. A redefinition of our literary past was needed at the end of the First World War, when the *Cambridge History of American Literature* was produced by a group of scholars. It is now needed again; and it will be needed still again." This is the premise, upon which the editors and forty-eight contributors of the *Literary History of the United States* have based their work.

Primarily a study of men and groups of men, with adequate consideration of the movements and influences which colored their writing, *Literary History* covers a vast period, beginning far earlier than do most surveys of our literature. In an "Address to the Reader," the editors declare that our literary history came into being "when the first settler from abroad of sensitive mind paused in his adventure long enough to feel that he was under a different sky, breathing new air, and that a New World was all before him with only his strength and Providence for guides." Our first literature—taking the word broadly—consisted in the reports and chronicles of the explorers and discoverers; it began to take shape, first in the southern colonies, and then in New England—the former factual and descriptive writing, the latter more of a directive type. The development from the *Bay Psalm Book* to *The People, Yes,* or from Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey, is not so remotely traceable as may be thought.

Movements, great and small; wars of blood and wars of thought are the major influences that have formed our native literature. In early New England, the Puritan religious beliefs were the basis of all writing, with effects both good and bad, and a permanent mark was left on American thought; so, too, with the middle colonies, where it was the Quaker faith; in the south, it was a Cavalier influence that bore with it "a legacy of the Renaissance." Writing as an art was not considered seriously until the late eighteenth century, although art was not missing from the writing of the earlier period. Writing, through the Revolution, was a form of instruction, and little more. Pamphleteering was a business, particularly in the decade or so that included the Revolution. The turn of the century brought an awareness of literature as a profession, although the first few who tried it failed. When at last native creative writing gained impetus, it was feeble, and buffeted by the easy availability of British work, but it was nevertheless a beginning, and an important one, which became a firm reality with Washington Irving, James

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Fenimore Cooper, and William Cullen Bryant, the first of our major literary figures. (Franklin, Jefferson, Paine belong to a separate category.)

From these men, progress was as swift as diversity was great. Among the writers were Poe, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Longfellow, William Dean Howells, Mark Twain, Henry James, Edward Arlington Robinson, Dreiser, Eugene O'Neill, T. S. Eliot, Hemingway—all linked more by their divergence than by their similarity; all affected by such movements and influences as the American dream of democrary, romanticism (imported), Civil War and its preludes, westward expansion, immigration, realism, idealism, naturalism, social reform—the movements and the men so interdependent that a sharp demarcation is virtually impossible.

It would be false to deny that American literature has its roots deep in European culture, especially the Anglo-Saxon, but perhaps the greatest service the editors and writers of the *Literary History* have rendered is to evaluate American literature in terms of America. At its best, American writing is, in a sense, *sui generis,* the product of conditions which in the Old World had vanished or had been drastically subdued before man became an artist. While the importance of British background is recognized, it is not overrated as it has been frequently in the past.

The preparation of this work involved about six years of conferences, writing, and editing; the authors—critics and historians—have been selected for their knowledge of the specific subject—for instance, Mencken on "The American Language," Sandburg on "Lincoln: the Soil and the Seed," Allan Nevins, on "Between Wars."

Perforce, there is a note of the arbitrary in some portions of the work, notably in the analyses of such individual figures as Franklin, Poe, Whitman, Dreiser and others of the same stature, but this is unavoidable, and it is to a degree counteracted by the frequent hints of disagreement between contributors on matters of both importance and insignificance. These differences of opinion which the editors have wisely permitted to stand, serve to avoid the present-day tendency to coat with the false gloss of congeniality everything from Philosophy to baby-sitting.

*The Literary History of the United States* should be accepted exactly as the editors and contributors present it, as a redefinition. In many cases, what is said is not new, but a reiteration; but in no way is this a condemnation, since history has established the need of frequent restatement.

ELIZABETH ANN COOPER.

*The Dukays. Lajos Zilahy. Prentice-Hall.* $3.50.

LAJOS ZILAHY is a well-known Hungarian novelist and playwright, but he is generally unfamiliar in this country. Two plays of his (*Siberia* and *The Firebird*), have appeared on Broadway, and Doubleday published two novels (*Two Prisoners* and *The Deserter*). His work has also appeared on the screen. The present novel, *The Dukays,* was written in hiding from the Nazis.

It is one of the most satisfactory novels I have ever read. It takes a forward leap in the history of literary expression simply because Zilahy can say exactly what he pleases, create a desired effect, and weave myth into the fabric of life (and turn the fabric into myth).

Zilahy uses the novelist's talent like a camera. As the lens moves up and down the years, into political and historical shadows, through rooms and hearts, it is accompanied by a voice, an almost impersonal an amused voice. But do not forget that Zilahy's sister was murdered in the late war. He himself hid with wife and child in cellars during the siege of Budapest. A deep note of sarcasm is betrayed when there is a description of any kind of human butchery—mental or physical. Zilahy has never affiliated himself with a political party. He is indeed a Citizen of the World—judging from the general tone of *The Dukays.*

The message of the book is peace and redemption, though it does not say how. It indicates, however, what to avoid, and it attempts to give a picture of the conditions of mind and state which produced these last 30-odd years of uncertainty and fright. This is done by the camera, and by the voice which accompanies the camera.

*The Dukays* are an aristocratic Hungarian family of vast wealth and lands. The novel describes their lives of survival and change before and between wars. Being a distinguished family, their influence is felt in governments, papal courts, waiting rooms, cabinets. The novel is divided into three sections and the two largest deal with events through the lives of Countess Kristina and Countess Zia. These two find happiness in love only after the playing out of many a false dream. These dreams, their history, their psychological effects, form a large part of the book. In fact, one of its most impelling qualities is this very tracing of the individual dream until it ends in disenchantment and has to be recast.

These some 790 pages will set readers into fits of laughter and scared amazement at Zilahy's wonderful impudence. My equilibrium was much more upset by the observations on nose-picking than it was by the discreet but nevertheless unrelenting indications of the Dukays' sex lives. Let it be said here that though there is nothing he won't say (there is more a feeling of this rather than printed evidence) there is never a breach of real taste. There is no comparison between the urbane and ingratiating earthiness of Mr. Zilahy and some of the labored, sexy moiling and toiling which magnetizes many "popular" opuses.

The entertainment value of *The Dukays* is high. It is full of color, rich detail and information, and true adventure. But when Zilahy relaxes beside his camera we find the voice belongs to a noble jester. Only a jester can dare to make faces at the gods and get away with it.

VIRGINIA BENNETT.

## CONTRIBUTORS

*Graham GREENE* is the well-known English novelist, the author of "The Heart of the Matter." This is soon to appear in a volume published by Viking.

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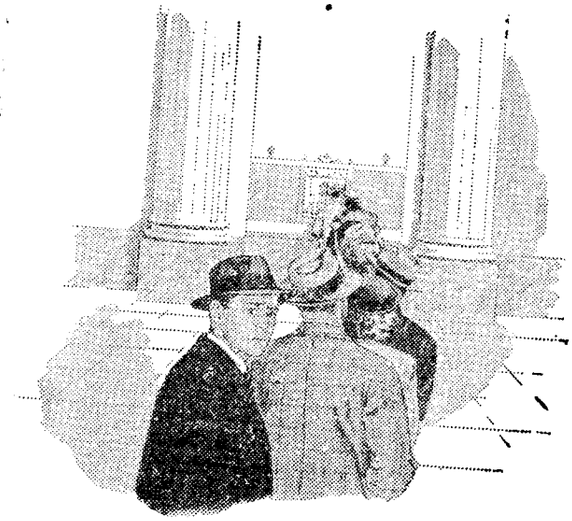

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